

She has received grants for site-specific performance in Toronto, published in the Canadian Theatre Review, and presented work internationally.

CRAFTING WITH FEMINISM: 25 GIRL-POWERED PROJECTS TO SMASH THE PATRIARCHY

Bonnie Burton

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REVIEWED BY DEBORAH HERMAN

In his late-career lecture on the woman problem, Freud reluctantly admitted that women have offered one contribution to Western culture, and that is the invention of the textile arts. Even that achievement, however, is a manifestation of shame. Women are ashamed of their “genital deficiency” and so their unconscious motive is to weave and plait their pubic hair in order to disguise their castration.

Bonnie Burton’s *Crafting With Feminism: 25 Girl-Powered Projects to Smash the Patriarchy* will have none of that. She takes the traditional Kinder, Küche, Kirche to task in a witty and winsome way. Her book is quirkily subversive, saving women’s work from charges of being childish, regressive, sexually repressed or representative of arrested development. “Bonnie has taken many clichés about feminism and turned them into wonderful exercises of whimsy,” writes Felicia Day in the book’s Foreword. “The projects embody the spirit of optimism and determination that I associate with feminist activism—a spirit, that, sadly, has fallen out of focus thanks to reactionary politics.” Despite the “Heroes of Feminism Finger Puppets,” many of the projects

are quite shocking. This is not your daughter’s Klutz book.

Burton opts instead to tear apart stereotypes of domesticity or girly frivolity by being playful with her politics. She’s crafty. Burton has hosted the YouTube channel shows Geek DIY and the Vaginal Fantasy Book Club and has published popular books like *The Star Wars Craft Book*, *Girls Against Girls*, and *Womanthology*. She takes part in the current renaissance of hands-on handicrafts as seen in the programming of second-tier cable channels like Makeful’s *Craft It Yourself*, *Post My Party*, and *Crazy Beautiful Weddings*, or in Debbie Stoller’s needlework books, *The Happy Hooker* and *Stitch and Bitch*. Bust magazine is currently hosting a “Craftacular” in Brooklyn that pulls together groups of like-minded artful types for workshops in macramé, marble painting, DJ’ing and even witchcraft. Burton provides a calendar for the reader to host themed parties to commemorate events like Glitter Day (the second Saturday of January), Galentine’s Day (February 12th), or International Yarnbombing Day (June 11th). Yarn-bombs are blowing up Pinterest and other social media sites—public statues and buildings are being wrapped in wool like the Reichstag. “We make things happen by making things,” writes Felicia Day. It is reminiscent of the Greenham Common Peace Movement’s women who established a Peace Camp outside a U.S. Air Force base in Britain in 1980 and knit wool condoms for the nukes.

There are no anti-Trump pussyhats in Burton’s repertoire, however; knitting is out of the scope of the DIY spirit anyway. The only cost involved is a quick trip to the dollar store for pipe cleaners and embroidery floss or simply raiding the recycle bin for supplies. Necessity is the mother of invention, after all. There is no expertise required; Burton offers an

appendix listing around-the-house supplies and instructions on how to do the basic running stitch or the whip stitch. No sewing machine required either (although that is a female invention!).

Freud’s shame is taken to task with cheeky crafts like vagina-shaped Christmas tree ornaments made from an easy-to-make salt dough, “Tampon Buddies” with embroidery floss hairdos and little fabric dresses or a “Huggable Uterus Body Pillow” with a pocket to house a heating pad for cramps. Even the panties have feminist slogans emblazoned on them, as do babies’ onesies. These hempen home-spuns reclaim women’s bodies with projects like a googly-eyed fun-fur monster pouch to store your feminine hygiene products. This radical use of toiletries would make even Martha Stewart proud. Self-care is underscored, such as homemade aromatherapy candles or an assertive “Nope” necklace made of old Scrabble tiles to let your assaulter know he’s committing sexual misconduct.

Other traditional forms of female adornment are turned inside out. There is a lovely crown for the princess who saves herself and a handful of rings bearing the images of historical queens. “Too many fairy tales involve a charming prince saving a young damsel from a life of toil and trouble just by marrying her and resting a bejeweled crown upon her head,” writes Burton. “Here in the real world, you know better. All you need to feel like a queen is flexible cardboard, fabric, lace, felt, fake flowers, and—of course—glitter.” High heels are upcycled into succulent planters and bras are fitted with secret cleavage pockets or sequined with flames to signify the infamous guerrilla street theatre stunt of 1968. Miss America’s sash bears “killjoy” titles like “Miss Behaves” or “Queen of Everything,” and Wonder Woman’s wrist-cuffs

are made from toilet paper rolls and felt to make a resounding “#MeToo” call-to-arms.

But it's not all about playing dress-up; there are also office supplies for the career woman like a pizza-shaped reusable lunch bag, a sarcastic “Male Chauvinist Tears”-painted coffee mug, and a sassy business card case made from a gutted girl band's cassette tape, held together with tape and magnets, so you can network in style. You can embrace your inner domestic goddess and découpage anti-diet “Food For Thought” dinnerware with Mod Podge or cut-and-paste cocktail-sipping Flappers onto a “Drinking Dames Flask.” You can even wear your heart on your sleeve with girl-scout inspired “Feminist Badges of Hono[u]r” that proclaim your politics, statements like “Girls Rule,” “Riots Not Diets,” or a cute embroidered fish awkwardly straddling a bike depicting the adage that a woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle.

The book revives ‘zine culture and the tactile pleasure of making something from scratch. I do have one caveat, however: While there are no knitting patterns, there are a lot of projects involving an embroidery (or “Em-broad-ery”) hoop, which are a little too advanced for the novice crafter. Burton makes up for it by offering a feminist primer, listing key texts in the second wave and the present “Craftivism” movement by the likes of Betty Friedan and bell hooks. The point is to have a good time while standing up for what you believe in; it's edutainment. Badger also offers tips on hosting girls' night crafting parties: riot-grrrl-inspired playlists, party themes from baby showers to fund-raisers, planning the “perfect crafternoon” or holding a chick-flick movie marathon.

Avant-garde feminism doesn't have to be to the barricades or in yer face to be effective.

The personal is political, and it can be fun, too.

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FLESH

Sonia Di Placido
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REVIEWED BY KATE ROGERS



At its best, poet Sonia Di Placido's *Flesh* is visceral. Associations tumble loose like the innards of a gutted animal. That's appropriate with references to hunting in northern Ontario, and especially, taxidermy. The poetry collection is literally and figuratively raw in places—with sections at the beginning entitled “Field Notes from a Taxidermist's Daughter” and “Recipes.” The latter section features many recipes for cooking game including Moose, Deer, Elk and Wild Turkey. Ironically, however, there are more

felt and visceral poems in other sections of the book, particularly in the sections “Friends” and “The Moon and Her Friends.”

The first poem in the first section, “Field Notes from a Taxidermist's Daughter” is “What is Animal Memorabilia?” It is felt and humorous. It begins with the amusing, macabre lines, “I remember ducks in the dryer.” The narrator goes on in her reverie to “remember the freezer keeping meat—a butcher/stocks his rocks of flesh for the feast.” (She plays) “Persephone hiding/from Hades in abasement.” However, the definition, “What is Taxidermy?” flattens the narrative of that section and the whole collection.

“Tenderise,” the first poem in the “Recipes” section, is also more lyrical and visceral than most of the recipes which follow. “Tenderise” begins with this stanza: “This is what I hear them tell me/from the refrigerator, marinating in milk/‘Our dead bodies want to thirst us.’” It goes on to declare that “The second coming of milk is pink.” If more associations had been set free in that poem it would have continued to be as interesting.

In the poem “Moose Meat & Pureed Tomato Stew,” also in the “Recipes” section, the description in the fifth stanza is evocative:

A rich tomato moose
bourguignon
...Like precious stones gone soft
the tissue folds, stouter than
beef...
Succulent with sauce, the plush
life
melts in the mouth.

The erasure treatment of “Wild Turkey” is interesting in the Notes section because as the recipe is “reduced,” the brutality of hunting is revealed:

hot water weakens the skin